



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Aug. 26, 2008

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North Dakota Department of Health Urges People To Take Preventive Measures To Reduce Rabies Exposures and Unnecessary Vaccinations

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health announced today that a significant increase in demand and a production delay has caused the availability of rabies vaccine to be limited. As a result, the Department of Health is urging people to reduce their risk of exposure to rabies and the resulting need for rabies vaccinations.

People can reduce their risk of being exposed to rabies by:

- Keeping pets up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.
- Staying away from unknown, stray or wild animals.
- Avoiding contact with the saliva of livestock that are ill.
- Reporting stray or unwanted animals to the local authorities.

Rabies can be transmitted to humans through exposure to the saliva of a rabid animal – usually through bites. Just petting or holding an animal does not constitute an exposure. People who have been exposed to a potentially rabid animal should:

- Capture the animal so that it is available for testing or observation. Contact law enforcement for help, if needed.
- Contact their local health unit or the state health department for further guidance.
- Contact their health-care provider regarding their exposure and proper wound care.

Bats often pose a problem because it is hard to determine if someone has been exposed. In situations where a bat is found in the home, call your local health unit or the state health department to help determine if an exposure occurred. Just having a bat in the house does not mean someone was exposed to rabies.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

The best course of action is to capture the bat and have it tested for rabies. Do NOT use pillowcases, towels or blankets to capture bats; many people have been bitten through the fabric doing this. In some North Dakota communities, an animal control officer may be available to help capture a bat and get it tested for rabies.

To capture a bat, follow these guidelines:

- Wear heavy gloves.
- Use a coffee can or similar hard-sided container (with a cover).
- Place the container over the bat.
- Slide the cover underneath to trap the bat inside the container.
- Take the bat to a veterinarian to be killed and the brain submitted for testing

Not all animal bites or exposures require the exposed person to receive rabies vaccinations. In many situations, rabies vaccinations can be delayed while the animal is observed (in the case of pets or livestock) or tested (in the case of wild animals, strays or bats) for the disease.

People who have questions about rabies may call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180 or their local public health unit. Additional information can be found on the North Dakota Department of Health website at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Rabies.

-- 30 --

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